

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 17, 2021**

### **NATIONAL**

- **On March 16, Rajya Sabha - passed a bill extending the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks for “special categories of women”**
  - ✓ The special category of women includes rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled and minors.
  - ✓ Lok Sabha had passed the bill in this regard last year.
  - ✓ Currently, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor, if it is done within 12 weeks of conception and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks.
  - ✓ The bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women between 20 and 24 weeks.
  - ✓ The bill also proposes not to reveal the name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated.
  - ✓ However, the upper limit for abortions will not be applicable in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities diagnosed by a medical board.
  - ✓ The government’s decision to increase the upper gestational limit for termination of pregnancy to 24 weeks from 20 weeks at present is likely to avoid unwanted pregnancies and complications arising from illegal abortions.
  - ✓ The bill was approved by the Ethics Committee and a Group of Ministers headed by Nitin Gadkari.
  - ✓ While there are over seven million abortions conducted in India annually, only 50% are estimated to be legal.
  - ✓ Around 8% of women opting for abortions die due to complications arising from unsafe abortions.
  
- **On March 16, the Union Cabinet - approved a bill to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) to raise long-term capital to finance infrastructure development.**

- ✓ The government intends to use the tax benefits to enable the financial institution to raise funds from investors.
- ✓ Under the initiative, the government is planning to raise an investment of ₹111 lakh crore by 2025.
- ✓ The proposed legislation will give effect to the Union Budget 2021-22 announcement made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2021.
- ✓ The government has proposed ₹20,000 crore as an initial amount to the DFI
- ✓ The minister said she expects the proposed institution to raise up to ₹3 lakh crore in the next few years because it will have access to the market funds, which are otherwise not available.
- ✓ After the budget announcement, around 7,000 projects have been identified under National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).
- ✓ The DFI will also get tax benefits for 10 years.
- ✓ DFI would comprise of a professional board in which 50% of the members will be non-official directors.
- ✓ In the initial phase, new institution will be owned by government while in the later phase, the government's stake will be cut to 26%.
- ✓ The government hopes to introduce the bill during the current session of Parliament.
- ✓ During its term, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government had decided to convert IDBI and ICICI into universal banks, while winding up IIBI and leaving IFCI without any scope to survive.
- ✓ IDFC, which was also set up as an infra finance entity, failed to deliver and ultimately was merged with another bank, Capital First to form IDFC First Bank
- ✓ IIFCL, set up by the UPA government, has remained a non-bank finance company that has not been able to improve.
- ✓ By all accounts, IIFCL will be merged into the new DFI, although the decision will be left to the board of the entity.

## **SUPREME COURT VERDICT**

- **On March 16, the Supreme Court – ordered that police should file reports within 48 hours in road accident cases**
- ✓ The apex court directed that electronic means to be adopted in the entire procedure
- ✓ To file reports, email or a dedicated website can be used and insurance companies can deposit money electronically through bank transfers to expedite grant of compensation in road accident cases
- ✓ A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and R Subhash Reddy said police have to report the accident to the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) and insurance company within 48 hours.

- ✓ The bench approved standard operating procedures framed by additional solicitor general Jayant Sud after holding consultations with all stakeholders including insurance companies.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On March 16, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - held a virtual summit with his Finland counterpart Sanna Marin**



- ✓ During the discussion, both the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international order and also expressed concern over the situation in Myanmar.
- ✓ The leaders also discussed the Covid-19 situation including their respective vaccination drives, and emphasized the importance of global efforts for urgent and affordable access to vaccines across all nations.
- ✓ PM Modi recalled that India has already supplied more than 58 million vaccine doses to 70 countries.
- ✓ India and Finland agreed to expand cooperation in emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence, 5G/6G, and quantum computing.
- ✓ They also announced digital partnership in future mobile technologies.

## PERSONALITIES

- **Former cabinet secretary P K Sinha - has resigned as principal advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**



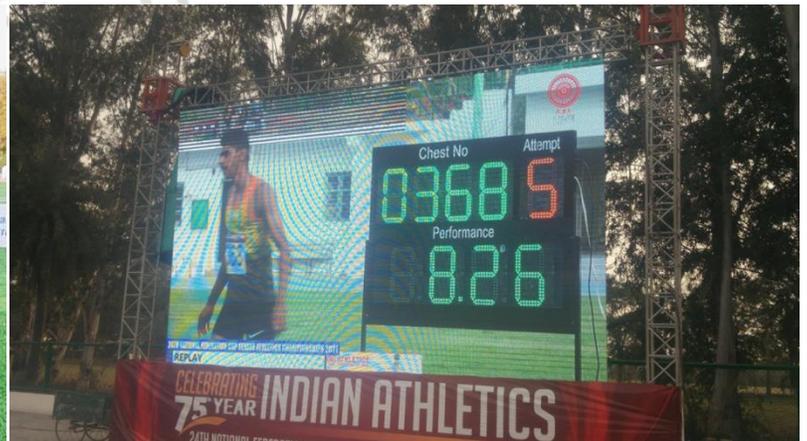
- ✓ An IAS officer of the 1977 batch, Sinha was appointed as principal advisor in September 2019.
- ✓ His responsibilities included policy matters and central departments that were not part of principal secretary P K Mishra and NSA Ajit Doval's briefs.
- ✓ Sinha moved to the PMO after he had served four years as cabinet secretary.
- ✓ Sinha also served as secretary in the power ministry.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Gland Pharma, based out of Hyderabad - to manufacture and supply 252 million (25.2 crore) doses of the Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V.**
- ✓ In this regard, it has entered into an agreement with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), a sovereign wealth fund
- ✓ The company expects to commence production of Sputnik V at its facilities in Hyderabad from the third quarter of 2021
- ✓ The deliveries of the vaccine are estimated to start from the fourth quarter of 2021.

## SPORTS

- **On March 16, long jumper Murali Sreeshankar – broke his own national record with an 8.26m jump for the title at the ongoing 24th Federation Cup in Patiala**



- ✓ In the process, 21-year old Sreeshankar also booked his ticket for the Tokyo Olympics.
- ✓ Murali Sreeshankar first broke the national record in September 2018 with an 8.20m jump at the Open Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar, Odisha
- ✓ In 2019, at the Doha World Championships, his best jump was 7.62m and he didn't even enter the final round and finished a disappointing 22nd.

- ✓ **Tamil Nadu's S Dhanalakshmi – won the most anticipated women's 100m final with a timing of 11.39 seconds**, which featured prominent names such as Dutee Chand and Hima Das
- ✓ The 22-year-old from Trichy beat seasoned campaigner Dutee — who was second with 11.58 seconds.
- ✓ Hima was disqualified for a false start.
- ✓ Dhanalakshmi hails from the Gundur village, which is about 10 km from Trichy.
- ✓ Despite the win in the event, Dhanalakshmi couldn't cross the Olympic qualification mark of 11.15 seconds.
- ✓ She made the finals as the fastest runner with a timing of 11.38 seconds.

## RANKINGS

- **Thirteen of the 15 most polluted cities in the world - were from north India, with Ghaziabad at second spot, followed by Bulandshahr at third place.**
- ✓ This is revealed in the World Air Quality Report, 2020, released by the Swiss air technology company, IQAir by collecting data across 106 countries
- ✓ Delhi is ranked as the most polluted capital in the world for the third straight year and the 10th most polluted city in the world
- ✓ Delhi recorded an annual average PM 2.5 concentration of 84.1ug/m<sup>3</sup>, as per the report released on March 16
- ✓ Delhi was followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh) with the annual concentrations of 77.1ug/m<sup>3</sup> and then Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) recording 46.6ug/m<sup>3</sup> of PM 2.5 levels last year.
- ✓ However, Delhi's air quality improved by approximately 15% between 2019 and 2020
- ✓ In 2020, all Indian cities that were monitored observed air quality improvements compared to 2018 while 63% of the Indian cities saw improvements over 2019.
- ✓ However, India still has 22 of the top 30 most polluted cities globally and 35 of the top 50.
- ✓ In the overall city ranking, China's Hotan topped the list while Ghaziabad in NCR was ranked second.
- ✓ All cities between rank 2 and 14 were Indian.
- ✓ The findings of the IQAir report were based on annual average of particulate matter PM<sub>2.5</sub> and the airborne particles having diameter less than 2.5 microns.
- ✓ Air pollution caused an estimated 54,000 premature deaths in New Delhi in 2020, according to another study by IQAir and Greenpeace Southeast Asia released recently.
- ✓ IQAir is a Swiss air quality technology company that specialises in developing air quality monitoring and air cleaning products.
- ✓ It also operates AirVisual, a real-time air quality information platform
- ✓ The report acknowledged contributions by Greenpeace, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) and the UN environment programme.

# Pollution fight goes up in smoke

Report says seven of the 10 most polluted cities in the world are located in NCR

## Why PM2.5 was picked

- PM2.5 is defined as ambient airborne particulates that measure up to 2.5 microns in size. These include a range of chemical makeups and come from a range of human-made sources, including fossil-fuel powered motor vehicles, power generation, industrial activity, agriculture and biomass burning.
- The microscopic size of PM2.5 allows these particles to enter the bloodstream upon inhalation, potentially causing far-reaching health effects. PM2.5 exposure has also been associated with low birth weight, increased acute respiratory infections and stroke.

**ANNUAL WHO PM2.5 target: 10µg/m<sup>3</sup>**

## The air Delhi breathes

**20-40%** Contribution of farm fires in Punjab to air pollution levels in Delhi

During peak burning season, Delhi experienced average PM2.5 levels of 144 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in November and 157 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in December, crossing the WHO's annual exposure guideline by over 14 times

**7mn**

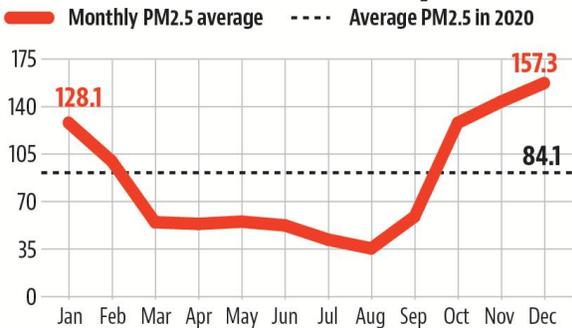
Premature deaths across the world every year due to air pollution

## Delhi has worst air of all capitals

(Average PM2.5 levels in 2020)

<b>Delhi, India</b>	<b>84.1</b>
Dhaka, Bangladesh	77.1
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	46.6
Kabul, Afghanistan	46.5
Doha, Qatar	44.3
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	43.5
Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina	42.5
Manama, Bahrain	39.7
Jakarta, Indonesia	39.6
Kathmandu, Nepal	39.2

## Delhi's PM2.5 levels last year



## Most polluted cities in the world

(Average PM2.5 levels in 2020)

Hotan, China	110.2
Ghaziabad	106.6
Bulandshahr	98.4
Bisrakh	96
Bhiwadi	95.5
Noida	94.3
Greater Noida	89.5
Kanpur	89.1
Lucknow	86.2
<b>Delhi</b>	<b>84.1</b>

Source: World Air Quality Report 2020 (This report only includes PM2.5 data that has been reported by ground-based monitoring stations in real time or close to real time. Data is sourced from government monitoring stations and private stations. Historical datasets provided by governments have been selectively added to fill gaps or add locations where available)